

## New Fiction

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storms lash the ocean, calling out all of skill and heroism that these most heroic of men can give; fabulous tropic islands float into view; daggers flash in the night; men go mad; dark Oriental girls love and die in torrents of passion; the faces of Chinese and Lascars peer mysteriously through portholes—all the paraphernalia of this sort of tale is present. But since incident is very emphatically not the supreme thing in these stories, the lack of a sense of inevitability, the failure of deed to grow convincingly and organically out of character and preceding deed, results in a rather unhappy sense of artificiality.

**BEAUTY FOR ASHES.** By Joan Sutherland. George H. Doran Company.

**A**LL the characters in this story—a large company—take life very painfully. The book suffers from abnormal blood pressure and is unrelieved by any humor or geniality, but it has some dramatic force and holds the attention. The hero, Lord Desmond, reminds one of some of Ouida's gentlemen, with modern improvements. The leading lady is a very beautiful young widow, Pauline, but it was Madge, the "madcap," who made the trouble for all hands. She and Lord Desmond had been carrying on a violent flirtation, with no serious intent, however, on his side, but Madge's husband, Toby Cardew, suspects the worst and makes a row, whereupon Madge runs away to Brighton and inflicts herself on the unwilling Lord Desmond. So the mischief is irreparable. But Desmond has just met Pauline and has realized at once that she is the only woman for him. And now he has Madge on his hands and, being a gentleman, must eventually marry her.

After this arrangement he goes to London and meets Pauline—for the second time. There is authority for the exclamation, "Whoever loved that loved not at first sight!" but when Desmond and Pauline fall into each others arms, at this their second meeting, the reader is apt to protest—"But this is so sudden!" Of course they are too noble to think of evading Desmond's responsibility to Madge, and decide to suffer in silence. There is an unsavory divorce trial, but Desmond is then providentially shipped off to Mesopotamia (blessed word) to bring home his brother, who is dying there. That gives a chance for a very well done bit of high adventure, as the town is raided by tribesmen and after some good fighting Desmond is left for dead. He is gone a long time, and Madge, who really didn't care for him, marries some one else, so when Desmond returns, safe and sound, he and Pauline are duly scheduled to live happily ever after.

Besides the other emotional content there is some religious meditation and mystic ecstasy. A good many of the characters are fit subjects for Freudian analysis. In particular, there is the Reverend Raven, rector of a very high church, who is suffering from ingrowing cellulacy and trying to find a cure in asceticism. His reactions to the return of his half-sister, the exquisitely feminine Pauline, are morbidly unpleasant. He is real enough, but he is a "case." These minor people are well done; better, on the whole, than the protagonists. But it is all a rather depressing business.

**BLACK CAESAR'S CLAN.** By Albert Payson Terhune. George H. Doran Company.

**M**R. TERHUNE is well inspired in his choice of Florida as the stage setting of this mystery story. "As in every land which has grown swiftly and along different lines from the rest of the country," he argues, "there still are mystery and thrills to be found lurking among the keys and back of the mangrove swamps and along the mystic reaches of sunset shore line" of southern Florida. To this advantageous natural background must be added a very queer old house, with good, old fashioned secret panels, and, of course, a buried treasure somewhere in the neighborhood. Naturally, there must be the right sort of people to go hunting the treasure and mixing it up with each other, and tradition demands a love story too. All these are present in abundance here. And—yes—there is a dog in it; a very good dog, of course, a collie. Probably Mr. Terhune couldn't write a novel without at least one dog as a character, and nobody wants him to try to do it, for his dogs are always fine canine gentlemen. But in this case the dog is not the chief hero.



Fred B. Smith, author of "On the Trail of the Peacemakers."

"Understand, please," says Mr. Terhune in a prefatory note, "that this book is rank melodrama. It has scant literary quality. It is not planned to edify. Its only mission is to entertain you and . . . to give you an occasional thrill." It is, indeed, melodrama, but it is first rate melodrama, and the rest of that warning is far too modest, for it takes more than a little literary skill to handle such material acceptably. In spite of his disclaimer it has "literary quality." Its people are taken from stock patterns, but they are vitalized; its plot makes use of good, old, tested machinery, but uses it admirably. As to edification, there is no lack of very serious little groups of thinkers who are busily engaged in producing the edifying, moralized novel, from psycho-analytic studies of sex and sociology down to the ancient type of Sunday school improving literature, and no one wants Mr. Terhune to be edifying in addition to telling so good and entertaining a yarn as this.

In the very nature of things, it is a story that must not be spoiled for the reader by betraying its plot. It must suffice to say that it opens with an attempted dog stealing and a bully fight between the beachcomber and the intelligent but elusive Gavin Brice; and then there was a girl with "a pair of steady gray eyes" and a gun—but that's enough to start you going. Once started, you will finish it if possible at a sitting.

**THE SINGING CAPTIVES.** By E. B. C. Jones. Boni & Liveright.

**A**BOUT half way through the book it is recorded of one of the minor actors that he was "beginning to find the subdued jangling of the Peel discords a little tiring." The reader will sympathize. It is a rather dreary business, spun out into thin prolixity. The book—it can hardly be called a story—deals with the feelings of the family of Sir Harold Peel and the dissatisfaction of its members with life and with each other. Roden, the eldest son, is a poet, but is more efficient than the rest, as he actually man-

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E. B. L. Jones, author of "The Singing Captives."

## When Critics Disagree The Public Must Decide

and the leading reviewers of books have seldom been so far apart as in their opinions of

# THIS FREEDOM

By  
**A. S. M. HUTCHINSON**  
Author of  
**IF WINTER COMES**

**Do YOU agree with Frederic Taber Cooper, in The New York Herald, who says:** "The sheer craftsmanship of this book, the rich and varied artistry of its development, lift the author forthwith from the class of interesting contemporary novelists into the foremost rank of English fiction."

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**Do YOU agree with John Clair Minot, in The Boston Herald, who says:** "'This Freedom' deserves to be rated as the novel of the year."

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## What is YOUR opinion of THIS FREEDOM?

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